



Of Saints And Multitudes

Revelation 7:1-17



The Revelation of Jesus Christ Of Saints and Multitudes Revelation 7:1-17

What is the biggest struggle you have faced as a Christian?

Between the 6th and 7th seal being open, there is a brief pause. Up until this point, the believers have felt the effects (albeit not the consequences) of the judgment being poured out on the world. Then, with the return of the martyrs and the persistent denial from the world of the Lordship of Christ while seeing clearly His omnipotent hand, creation pauses and the scene shifts. John's vision makes it clear that the judgment will be ramping up in intensity and in consequence. The nearer to the end of time that humanity approaches, the more adverse the effects. After all, sin is permitted to remain for the sake of saving as many persons ensnared by its alluring grasp. Thus, as sin continues, its effects on the world continue and the punishment becomes more and more deserved with each passing day. In fact, the judgment of God has already started, pouring out the first seals by the hand of the Lamb of God.

John's vision makes it clear that the identity of the one pouring out the judgment is the lamb of God, the sacrifice on our behalf. The intent of God has always been to return people to Himself in the safety of a relationship with Him. Thus, before continuing on, the messengers of God are instructed to not harm the earth until the people of God are safely sealed and marked as being with God. Judgment is suspended as they are given the sign in them that their life has been redeemed. In seeing how the angels hold until the believers have been seal, the nature of Christ is revealed. While judgment is being poured out on the world, the Lion of Judah remains a Lamb having been slain. The objective is not to punish the world but rather to give enough time for the fulfillment and return of the body of Christ. You see a similar concept in Matthew 13:29-30, ESV through the parable of the wheat and chaff to not burn the contaminated mixture until they have been properly sorted and saved according to the predestination of God. The objective is not to punish but to provide safety for those whose identity is in Jesus Christ.

The 144,000

The subject of the identity of the 144,000 is hotly debated among various scholars and academics. At first glance it would seem to be describing the children of Israel, descendants of Jacob, later renamed Israel. This would seem to imply the whole of the people of Israel will first be sealed. Yet, the list of names is not identical to the children, mainly with the omission of Dan and the half tribe of Israel. This, largely could be explained throughout the course of history in which these tribes abandoned the truth faith during the time of the two Kingdom's split or during the time of exile. Neither fully returned, having abandoned the one true God unrepentantly. Furthermore, this list differs for the normal description of the twelve tribes of Israel in that Judah is mentioned first, rather than Reuben who rightfully should have been named first as the firstborn. While various explanations have been given, the inclusion of the names clearly implied a connection to the people of Israel who have remained faithful to God. They will one day see eternity.

Whatever the identity of the 144,000, we can be sure that we will join in the faith of the elders who have gone before us. The God of the Old Testament is the same God of the New Testament. The Old Testament elders maintained faith in a pre-incarnate Christ. Their acts of obedience were done in faith of a coming Messiah who would rescue them. The faith of the New Testament, while under the conditions of the New Covenant, bought by the blood of Jesus Christ, worships the same God. Our God is ageless and eternal. One day, we will have the opportunity to worship alongside the historic figures as members of God's chosen people, grafted in to the one true faith.

The Great Multitudes

At this, you see something remarkably similar to the throne room of God manifesting itself on the earth. The 144,000 have been established, rooting itself in the history of God's calling of the people out of slavery, out of death, and calling them to a new purpose. They are the elders of the church. Then you have the great multitudes from all nations, tribes, and tongues, and peo-

ple. Their number vastly exceeds the 144,000 and, like in the throne room of Heaven, they respond with worship, giving glory to God who has plucked them from the very hands of sin and death. They are clothed in robes of white. Not that the clothes were theirs but rather they were given the robes of white. The righteousness of God had been applied to them and, though they were undeserving, God made them holy.

As John remarks on their identity, the elder makes it clear, these are the people who have come out of the tribulation. For the church, it is undeniable that we will face difficulties and tribulations of many kinds (John 16:33). Their presence as being sealed by the angels should be a source of hope for people. Whatever tribulation they faced, whatever difficulties they endured, they will not last. God does not desire our personal destruction but only that loves who have come to him could be safe from the judgment. This is precisely why the lion of Judah is a lamb looking as if it had been slain; as a propitiation, or a payment that satisfies, of our sins. In Christ, the people of God are no longer held under the weight of their sins but are released into the fullness and hope of an eternity with Jesus Christ.

Discussion Questions

- Why are the angels giving the command to not harm the world until the people of God has been marked? How does this reveal the heart of God regarding His people?
- What does it mean that God is unchanging? Why is this significant that God does not change with the times? How do you feel that you and the Saints of the Old Testament will stand equally before God?
- Compare the scene in Chapter 7 and the throne room of God in Chapter 4? How are they similar? How are they different? What does this tell us about the presence of God on earth?
- What seven things do the multitude praise God with in verse 12? What does it mean to give these things to God? Why should we do so?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____

- Where have you experienced difficulty because of your faith? What encouragement do you find in this passage?
- What is the source of our holiness? What did we contribute to our own salvation or righteousness? How does this depict God's power over our sin?